CITY OF SANTA MARIA
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL/
BLOCK GRANTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DOROTHEA NELSON ROOM

JANUARY 10, 2008

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG.
Mayor Lavagnino led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

CALL TO ORDER:
Mayor Lavagnino called the Special Meeting of the City Council and Block Grants Advisory Committee to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

CITY COUNCIL
MEMBERS PRESENT:
Councilmembers Orach, Patino, Trujillo, Zacarías and Mayor Lavagnino.

BLOCK GRANTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEMBERS PRESENT:
Committee Members Bierdzinski, Carter, Cordary, Cudd, Dickerson, Doyle, Francis, Litzinger, Marquez, McCoy, Ventriglia, Wolcott, and Zermeño.

MEMBERS ABSENT:
Committee Members Cifuentes and Ponce.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:
City Manager Ness, City Attorney Trujillo, Assistant City Manager Haydon, Director of Recreation and Parks Posada, Director of Administrative Services Snodgrass, City Librarian Buchanan, Community Programs Manager Coelho-Hudson, Grants Specialist Alarcon, and Chief Deputy City Clerk Perez.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
There were none at this time.

JOINT STUDY SESSION REGARDING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDING PRIORITIES.
Community Programs Manager Coelho-Hudson gave the staff report. The City of Santa Maria has been receiving monies under both Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs for many years. While local discretion is allowed as to how the funds may be used, there are specific and somewhat complicated federal regulations that must be followed in administering these programs. A Consolidated Plan must be developed and submitted every five years and an Action Plan on an annual basis. The Council-approved Block Grants Advisory Committee is responsible for overseeing the annual process and making recommendations for allocations to the City Council. In 2004, a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted by the Committee with the assistance of the All-America City Committee. The input collected indicated that the main issues causing impacts to the community were: 1) the need for affordable housing; 2) the need for economic development and educational opportunities; 3) the need for physical health services and facilities; 4) the need for services and facilities for special need and mental health populations; and 5) financial hardship and the need for basic human necessities. As a result, the Block Grants Advisory Committee adopted four priorities which were approved by the Council. Those weighted priorities were: 1) prevent homelessness and address critical emergency needs and persons with special needs; 2) provide affordable housing; 3) expand educational opportunities; and 4) expand economic development. Three additional priorities were also adopted to promote collaborative strategies that strengthen families through the Families for the First Decade project; support opportunities for youth development; and provide community infrastructure. Since that time there has been little change expressed by the public in the needs of the community.

During the CDBG Grant Allocation process last year, the City Council requested a joint study session with the Block Grants Advisory Committee be held to discuss and clarify funding priorities for Community Development Block Grant/HOME Program funds. In anticipation of the joint meeting, the Block Grants Advisory Committee compiled a list of items to discuss. Those items were: 1) allocation of program income from previous years to the current year; 2) allocation of funds to Families for the First Decade Project agencies; 3) allocation of funds for Youth Services; 4) and allocation of many small grants or larger grants to fewer agencies.

Councilmember Zacarías asked if there had been any opportunity to leverage additional dollars for the City to increase the pot of money. She said she recognized that many of the agencies survived by piecing together all available funding from a wide variety of sources. Having one collaborative grant application being done rather than each agency trying to submit multiple grant applications would save a lot of money and leverage a bigger pot of money.

Community Programs Manager Coelho-Hudson stated there have been other revenue sources for some projects in the past such as Federal Revenue Sharing. Those revenue sources have been discontinued.

Committee Member Cordary stated the Committee was told by some of the groups last year that they could not get grant money from other sources if they did not receive any funding from the City. They needed to show support from the City.

Mayor Lavagnino stated he asked staff how much non-profit groups had gained from the City over the last twenty years in CDBG funds, and the amount was $5,330,000. The City has done a very good job when a lot of cities did not give any of their CDBG funds to non-profit agencies.

Councilmember Orach stated over the last decade that the number of non-profit agencies applying for funds had really escalated, as well as the amount of need.

Mayor Lavagnino stated, in his opinion, the limited funds had to go where they were most needed.

Councilmember Zacarías stated some cities match their CDBG funds in order to increase the pot so that non-profit agencies get more money.

Councilmember Trujillo explained that when he worked for TRW there was a pot of $2 million that was given to the community. It was not TRW money, it was employee money. He suggested getting more corporate funding to increase the pot.

Mayor Lavagnino opened the discussion up to the public.

Dr. Carrick Adams, Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley, talked about the need for funding for children and youth in the community.

Kathy Hayes, Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, talked about the increase in the number of people in need of food in the community.

Johnna Perez, North County Rape Crisis and Child Protection Center, talked about wanting to continue working with the people of the community.

Jim Talbot, SMOOTH Transportation, spoke in support of senior services, especially Senior Dial-A-Ride which had an increased ridership of over 200%. He commented that the non-profit agencies appreciated the sprinkling of funds received from the City.

Richard Brown, Habitat for Humanity, talked about the services provided by Habitat for Humanity, and the need for help in purchasing land for housing.

Sylvia Barnard, Good Samaritan, thanked the Committee and Council for all the funding they have received in the past. She talked about the increased need in the community for shelter and meals for homeless people, especially families with children. She indicated

the County would be severely cutting funding for mental health services which would mean more people out on the street. In addition, there were also a lot of people who were losing their homes.

Jesse Chavarria spoke in favor of more funding for youth organizations. The number of young people in the City was about 30%.

Dan Lopez also spoke in support of funding more services for the youth and the importance of helping the youth early so they didn't turn to crime and drugs as adults. He talked about single-parent households and the need for more funding for childcare centers.

Ashley Paine, Community Partners in Caring, said their number of clients had grown considerably as people were living longer.

Sheryl Flores, People's Self-Help Housing, explained that not only did they develop housing, they also provided mental health services and after-school services.

David Coelho commended the Committee and the Council for doing a great job in allocating the funding available.

Mayor Lavagnino commended the Block Grants Advisory Committee for all their hard work. He said once the priorities were set, it was in their hands to review the applications and make recommendations to the Council. When that recommendation came to the City Council, he would support it.

Mayor Lavagnino asked how many of the non-profits would not like to see change in the priorities and then how many would. The response was in favor of no changes to the priorities.

Mayor Lavagnino asked if anyone had issues that they wanted to consider that were new issues.

David Francis stated the work the Committee did and the allocations it made were not a "sprinkling." It was taking the money available and making the best decisions for the community based on the priorities. A sprinkle would be $500, not the larger amounts the Committee allocated.

Councilmember Trujillo asked if any of the Committee Members had suggestions for changes in the priorities because of their experience in working with and visiting the non-profit organizations.

Mayor Lavagnino read from the staff report the points to remember including 1) the intent of the CDBG and HOME Programs to provide direct assistance and benefits to the neediest and poorest segments in the community; 2) the consequences to the community of funding new programs of lower priority and eliminating existing programs of higher priority that are operated by agencies that may not have the capacity or depth of funding resources; and 3) some projects or programs, by the very nature of their activities, may be eligible for other grant resources.

Councilmember Orach stated Richard Brown talked about the HOME program funds and that was different than the Public Services allocations. The use of General Fund money probably wasn't going to happen because those funds were needed for Police and Fire. The dollars that the City received was all the money available. The original concept for the Families for the First Decade was fantastic. He commented that he loved the youth of the community and thought the City was already doing a lot with the after-school programs and the Abel Maldonado Youth Center which were paid for with General Fund dollars.

Mayor Lavagnino asked the Committee Members if they felt there should be any changes in the criteria and priorities.

Committee Chairperson Ventriglia stated the Committee loved the fact that its whole focus was helping those people who really needed it. The Committee wanted a reaffirmation

that that should still be its first priority. If the Committee needed to include prevention or youth services, it needed direction from the City Council to do that.

Mayor Lavagnino stated he understood that if a non-profit agency was not in the first priority criteria, it did not get any funding because there was not enough money. That first priority was to help the most needy segments of the community. The focus of the CDBG program was to help the neediest of the community. He would love to give money to the Boy Scouts and the Boys and Girls Club, but those organizations had other ways to raise money.

Councilmember Patino stated she and Councilmember Trujillo wanted this meeting because they felt the youth were being left out. The children of the community were so needy. Santa Maria was a community that was poor. There were no treatment centers in the community for youth addicted to drugs and alcohol. She wanted to see more go to youth organizations. The adult that was addicted to drugs and was not making much of their life, probably couldn't be helped; but the community certainly could do something to help the youth.

Councilmember Trujillo stated he agreed. He said he didn't buy the concept that since the City had been doing this for 10 years, it should continue doing it the same way. There were needs out there for children. There were a lot of kids in the community that were close to being homeless. More money needed to be made available for youth.

Committee Member Cordary stated every year when the Committee went through the allocation process there was a lot of yelling and screaming. She said her heart was with teenagers and youth. However, she could not give the Boy Scouts money and take away from so many of these non-profit agencies that do help the needy children in the community. It was heart-breaking for the Committee. Every year they voted on what was the best for the community.

Committee Member Dickerson said that he heard a lot of comments about paying more attention to the youth of the community. He pointed out that most of the agencies funded by the City were providing services to families with kids. He said in his opinion, the Committee's number one priority was helping people who were hungry or didn't have shelter.

Councilmember Orach stated the City used CDBG money to build the Abel Maldonado Youth Center and had used some of it for the Library which would have many programs and services for the youth. He said he did not see how anyone could say the City was not supporting the youth of the community with CDBG funds.

Mayor Lavagnino stated compared to other cities, Santa Maria had done a lot for the youth. He said he was convinced that the priorities that had been set should stay the same.

City Manager Ness stated everybody in the room would like to give as much money as possible to the non-profit agencies. The Committee struggled each year to take that limited financing and fit the need. When the applications were submitted, the requests for funding were four or five times greater than the funding available. Most of the discussion tonight was regarding the public service funding. The capital project money was available for things like the Library and the Abel Maldonado Youth Center. If the non-profits got a grant from the City, they could take that money and leverage it for additional dollars. He suggested the City General Fund provide a match on a trial basis of about 15% of the $200,000 CDBG public services allocation or approximately $30,000, with direction to the Committee that the additional money be provided to youth and youth prevention services.

Mayor Lavagnino asked if eliminating the priority for funding the Families for the First Decade project would help the Committee.

Director of Recreation and Parks Posada indicated the concept of the Families for the First Decade was good. The idea of putting it into the CDBG criteria was so those agencies serving the youth could get a boost up into the funding levels. If that criteria was eliminated as a priority, the need for youth services would still be there. The concept for

creating a collaborative to go out and solicit funding for youth services was still going to move forward. There were groups in the community that might be able to help turn the $30,000 into $50,000 or $60,000.

Councilmember Zacarías commended the Committee and said she trusted the Committee's recommendations. She said she could not see how anyone would want to change priority one, helping the most needy. She could not see shifting the priorities even though she strongly supported youth. She commended the Committee for its leadership in recommending the tenant assistance program. She suggested the Committee take the additional money and find a development person who could build it into a larger pot of money. She asked if there could be a fund set up outside the CDBG program to support the youth like the Business Retention and Attraction Loan Program.

Councilmember Orach stated the United Way and the City were the ones who really pushed the Families for the First Decade project. The non-profit agencies were all so busy that going to one more meeting became too difficult. He liked the idea for the extra $30,000. Mental health and drug and alcohol prevention was the County's responsibility, and the County was falling down on that.

Committee Chairperson Ventriglia stated the Committee had special criteria that it asked of the applicants as part of the application process. They were asked if they were part of the Families for the First Decade project. She suggested changing the application to ask if they served the youth of the community and provided prevention services. That would help the Committee in its deliberations.

Councilmember Patino suggested that the $30,000 be used for youth groups with the understanding that they were not going to get funded every year. It would not be to sustain them, but just to give them a little boost.

Committee Member Francis stated he didn't see one of his responsibilities as a Committee Member to be fundraising. He asked for clarification from the City Council on whether that was the Council's direction. He said he thought the concept of focusing on the youth was nebulous. He asked how the Committee was supposed to define new youth services that might be provided funding? The Committee had funded Boys and Girls Club activities in the past to keep them going. The Committee looked at what other funding sources an organization had and what would happen to them if they did not get funded. The Committee needed some sense of where the Council would like it to go and what kinds of things would be appropriate to fund.

Committee Member Wolcott stated there were approximately 736 homeless children in the community. She asked if those children were part of the youth that Councilmembers Patino and Trujillo were talking about. She indicated that Good Samaritan provided after-school counseling for them. The Foodbank made sure they had food for over the weekend. The City also provided funding for Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center which provided emergency counseling for children in the schools when the teachers saw a problem developing.

Committee Member McCoy talked about Community Action Commission. They work with two groups of kids from ages 14-18 and 18-21. They provide housing, counseling, training, and transportation to help the youth find jobs.

Committee Member Marquez stated she would like to see funding for detox services for teens that were addicted to drugs. She asked if the Council wanted the Committee to look at prevention services as well as the needy.

Committee Member Cordary stated she called the group of kids between 14 and 18 her "forgotten kids." They got addicted to drugs, and there was nothing for them. She said she would love to see something like that, but the Committee couldn't cover everything with the funding available.

Mayor Lavagnino suggested the City Council eliminate giving priority to the Families for the First Decade project and give the Committee direction on allocation of the extra money. He said the Council's heart was bigger than its pocketbook. He said he was

surprised to learn how many of the organizations the City funded did supply services to the youth.

Committee Chairperson Ventriglia suggested the Committee discuss priorities for the additional money at its next meeting.

City Manager Ness suggested eliminating the Families for the First Decade project priority and retaining the other priorities with the addition of the extra pot of money. The Committee could create a special category for that extra money for youth services, youth development, and prevention.

Councilmember Zacarías stated she in no way intended for the Committee to start fundraising; however, Committee Member Dickerson had been successful in raising enough money to buy the beautiful new decorations on Broadway.

Councilmember Trujillo stated he did not want the Council to put the Committee in a straight jacket. The Committee should have the authority to do what it thought was right for the community.

Councilmember Zacarías moved to eliminate giving priority to the Families for the First Decade project. Councilmember Patino seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

There was no further discussion.

ADJOURNMENT:
Mayor Lavagnino adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m. to the Regular City Council Meeting on Tuesday, January 15, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers and to the Block Grants Advisory Committee Meeting on January 28, 2008, at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Conference Room.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL:

February 5, 2008
Date

Mayor

ATTEST:

Chief Deputy City Clerk

APPROVED BY BLOCK GRANTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

February 11, 2008
Date

Chairperson

ATTEST:

Celeste Coelho-Hudson
Community Programs Manager